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Battle on the Potomac

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By Robert S. Allen

Washington, Nov. 17 The Central Intelligence Agency is definitely headed for another critical scrutiny at the coming session of Congress.

The backstage plan is again to try to set up a special committee with watchdog authority over CIA, as the Joint Atomic Committee has over the Atomic Energy Commission. Such legislation was rejected by the Senate last spring, but another fight will be made for it next year.

The bipartisan sponsors of the measure are already laying the ground for this. The war-inflamed crises in the Middle East and satellite countries are providing them with a lot of material.

There was a significant tip-off on these undercover preparations at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's long meeting with top Administration officials.

CIA Director Allen Dulles was subjected to critical grilling on charges of failing to provide adequate advance information on the British-French-Israeli assault in Egypt, and the Polish and Hungarian revolts against Russian rule.

These blasts at CIA are nothing new. The Intelligence Agency has long been under fire by both Republicans and Democrats on complaints of incompetence and bungling. The significance of this barrage is that it was obviously for the purpose of providing ammunition for the coming legislative battle.

This intention was not lost on Dulles. He defended himself and his agency vigorously.

Sen. Mansfield, (Mont.), slated to be the Democrats' new Assistant Floor Leader, wasted no breath in bluntly putting Dulles on the spot.

"Why were we caught napping on what happened in the Middle East, Poland and Hungary?" demanded Mansfield. "Why is our Intelligence always so inadequate; so poor, or totally missing?"

A categorical denial of all these accusations was made by Dulles.

"Our Intelligence concerning the attack on Egypt was excellent," he retorted. "A full report warning that Israel was preparing a major attack against Egypt was placed on President Eisen-

hower's desk more than 24 hours before the event occurred. That report also forecast the likelihood that Britain and France would aid Israel once the fighting broke out."

This brought an exclamation of surprise from Sen. Fulbright (D., Ark.).

"Then how did it happen the President displayed so much astonishment when his press secretary handed him a news dispatch about this attack?" asked Fulbright. "I have a press report in my hand quoting Hagerty as stating the President got his first word of this attack from a press dispatch."

"I believe you will find that what Hagerty actually said," pointed out Dulles, "was that the President was informed of the attack when he read the press report. That is quite different from first knowing about it. The President did know about it in advance."

That drew a challenge from another angle by Mansfield.

"If he knew an attack was coming," demanded the Montanan, "then why didn't he act; why didn't he do something to avert this dangerous conflict?"

"That's a question which should be directed to other officials," declared Dulles. "I am concerned with Intelligence. My job is to gather information, evaluate it and to report it. What is done about it is outside of my jurisdiction."

Dulles also asserted the CIA had submitted numerous reports on unrest in the satellites and the likelihood of uprisings.

"It is difficult to forecast the exact timing of such revolts," he pointed out. "You can never tell just what will touch them off. But we definitely knew they were in the making, and also that the Kremlin would react as ruthlessly as it did in Hungary, and may yet do in Poland."

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